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SERMON
EXHORTING
TO
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IN
RELIGION.

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By E.^{Edward} YOUNG.

L O N D O N,

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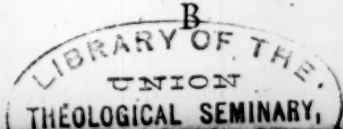
St JOHN xvi. 31, 32.

Do ye now believe? Behold the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone.

THIS Day in the Kalendar of the Church bears the name of Rogation-Sunday, as being the Head of a Season set apart for more than ordinary Prayers and Supplications unto God. The Calamities of a Particular Church begun the Usage; but the Piety of the Universal thought fit to continue it, as well to deprecate the like Calamities, as also to implore more instantly the Spiritual Presence of Christ with his Church, at the same time when we contemplate his bodily absence by reason of his Ascension.

Suitable to this purpose, there is a Gospel selected for the Day, in which our Saviour himself treats of the Nature and Efficacy of Prayer. Being now about to leave his Disciples he re-

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commends Prayer to be to them (as it were) the Equivalent of Himself; to supply them with all the Consolations of his own Presence; and so to fill up their Joy, that they should want none, tho' he were away: *Ask* (says he) *and you shall receive, that your Joy may be full.* For he tells them, that tho' he was going from them, He was only going to the Father, and there to be their Advocate, and to secure a Return to all their Petitions: *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name he shall give it you.* Besides this, He tells them, that the Father himself loved them, and that the Comforter should come and abide with Them, till such time as They should come and abide with Himself in the Mansions of Heaven. The Disciples having their Affections rais'd and made warm by this obliging Discovery, immediately declare themselves Believers, convinc'd, enlightened, satisfied: *Now we are sure that Thou knowest all Things; Now we Believe that Thou camest forth from God.* To which our Saviour makes this reply in the Text, *Do ye now believe? Behold the hour cometh, yea is now come, that, &c.*

Which words may be distinguish'd into Two general Parts, (*viz.*) The Rebuke of a Present fault in the Disciples, and The Warning of a Future. The first words, *Do ye now believe?* is a manifest Rebuke; and it may seem to charge the Faith

Faith that the Disciples had now profest with a Three-fold Defect, That it was Late, That it was Cheap, and That it was Mistaken : For each of These may be naturally infer'd from the import of the Question. (*ex. gr.*)

First, *Do ye now believe?* But why did ye not believe sooner? Have you not had sufficient means of Conviction till now? Have you not long since seen my Miracles, and heard my Doctrine? Have I not told you heretofore, that *I came forth from the Father*, and that *I and the Father are one?* wherefore your Faith is reproachable, for that it is so Late.

Secondly, *Do ye now believe?* But what does it cost You to do so? What temptation have you to the contrary? Your Faith now only lays hold of my Promises, and is not at all discourag'd by any of your own Fears: For what Difficulties are you brought to? What Peril do you run by this private Confession of me? And therefore your Faith is not to be boasted of, 'tis rather reproachable, for that it is so Cheap.

Thirdly, *Do ye now believe?* i. e. Are you sure you do believe? Do you not think too indulgently of your selves? Have you examin'd your own hearts, and secur'd the Grounds of your Confidence? Indeed *you seem to your selves* to believe; but I (who know you better than you do

your selves) find that you do not believe as you ought: For a true Faith will never be a Deserter; but you will by and by desert me: And therefore your Faith is reproachable, for that it is so mistaken.

Perhaps all these Three Defects were to be found in the present Faith of the Disciples, at least in some measure: But I am sure they are actually and ordinarily found in the Faith of other Professors; and therefore let us make some short Reflections upon them.

- I. Upon the Lateness of their Faith. None may deny, but that the Disciples did believe before; They had made the same Confession before: But yet we must acknowledge that their Faith was hitherto weak and labouring and perplex'd: And the Reason of all, was the Prejudice they were bred in, (*viz.*) That the Messiah was to set up a Worldly Kingdom. So that when our Saviour discours'd to them concerning Persecution and the Cross, tho' the Veneration they had for his awful Goodness, would not suffer them to disbelieve what he said; yet their rooted belief of another thing inconsistent with this, could not but hold their Faith under an intricate suspense: But now (This Evening) our Saviour had by a more free and full Discovery weeded this Prejudice out of their Minds: He had satisfi'd them that

that the Messiah's Kingdom was Heavenly ; That the Redemption by Him was Moral, not from Suffering, but from Sin ; That the World, and They, were of different Families, different Fashions, different Fortunes : From which Discovery their Faith grew consistent, it no longer contradicted it self ; and therefore it was now profest, as if it were perfectly New ; *Now we Believe.*

Let us observe from hence, That, No Man can have an approvable or steady Faith, till such time as he has rendred himself Indifferent to the World. When GOD trained up *Abraham*, as a Pattern to those that should afterwards Believe, he began with him at this Point, He was to take God for his All : God was to be to him instead of Country, and Friends, and all other Interests : God was to be to him both his *Shield* and his *Reward* ; *i.e.* For him to have sought for either any Deliverances, or any Advantages, but such as perfectly comported with his Relyance upon God, had been absolute Infidelity in him : And the same it must be in us. The same God offers himself to us in the Gospel, but together with his Cross ; So that all Worldly Comforts, excepting that of Internal Peace, are absolutely contingent to our Covenant ; And if we will not receive Him upon these Terms, we are already judg'd unworthy of Him. He then is a Christian.

stian Believer who has set down and consider'd,
 what expence he can be at for Salvation: who
 has put Temporal and Eternal good things into
 different Scales, and weigh'd them apart; and
 then resolv'd which to chuse, tho' perhaps they
 were never to meet, from the moment of his
 Choice: Who can say to himself-- "I am en-
 gag'd to follow my Master, and this is the
 "only point I aim at: I will therefore be humble
 "and charitable and inoffensive; I will be Mo-
 derate in my Desires, and Temperate in my
 "Enjoyments, Honest in my Dealings, and
 "Faithful to my Promises; I will not Strain my
 "Conscience in hopes of Advantage, nor be
 "wanting to Truth for fear of Disobliging:
 "These are the only Arts of Living, that I de-
 sire to be acquainted with, and if it shall please
 "God to bless these to me with worldly pro-
 sperity, I know my self oblig'd to greater
 "Thankfulness for my present Comforts; but
 "yet, if these fail, I will not be less Thankful
 "for my future assurances.

This is a Faith founded upon a Rock: But he
 whose Piety varies and fluctuates according to
 the different faces of the World; that swells at
 Gain, and ebbs at Loss, and sometimes sinks ei-
 ther in the calm of Pleasures, or under the pres-
 sure of Affliction; such a one is (as the Apostle
 ex-

expresses him) *like a wave of the sea, driven about and tossed; let him not expect to receive any thing from the Lord.* In a word, It is worldly adherences that make men late Believers; nay, occasions that multitudes who in view of a subsequent Faith have renounced the world from their Cradle, have not yet arrived at that Faith (then presumed on) to their Graves.

II. The Second thing to be reflected on is the Cheapness of the Disciples Faith; and that must be estimated from the encouragements that they had just then received: They had just received full assurances of their Master's endearment, of the Love of the Father, of the Cohabitation of the Spirit, of the Income of their Prayers, of a Future eternal Reward: And no wonder if the warmth of such encouragements as these made their Faith spring up to a *promising blade*; but yet we see that for want of a *deeper root* the next Trial made it *wither*. Let us observe from hence--- Never to trust that Religion that grows from an occasional Complacency or Elevation of Spirits. A good Humour makes a good Christian very cheaply, but very deceitfully: While we contemplate the indulgent Love of Christ, and the precious Promises of the Gospel; the present however, and the future Advantages of being Religious, how easie is it to pass into a
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Resolution of being so? While the Providence of God seems to smile upon us in the Success of Affairs, how forward are our purposes to be Thankful? While men give us respect, and flatter our Inclinations, how prone a thing is it to be Courteous? While no body does us any Injury or Affront, how gloriously can we pronounce our selves in Charity with all the world? But in the mean time there may be nothing of a grounded Religion in all this; It may be no more than the Natural result of the present state of our mind; which being at ease with the posture of things without, is not willing to risle its own enjoyment by any disturbing Passions within. This therefore is not to be trusted to: But he that will entertain any reasonable hopes of his own Christianity must find it in the experiences of Temptation; what he can Forgive when Injury provokes him; what he can Suffer when Danger presents it self; what he can forego of his own to promote the Interests of Piety: And without these Experiences all our Professions, tho' never so couragious, are but like *Ephraim's* carrying about his Arms and his Bow as the badges of his Valour, and yet running away in the day of Battle.

III. The last Circumstance we are to reflect upon, is, the Disciples Mistake of their Faith: It

It was their own hearts they pronounc'd upon, and yet they were deceived; and they cryed very unseasonably, *now we believe*, just at the moment when they were ready to confute their Pretence. Let us observe hence-- That men are naturally apt to harbour too indulgent an opinion of themselves. It must be acknowledged that we are all too apt to do so; notwithstanding that (as we may learn from the present Instance) such an Opinion be extremely treacherous, and the readiest way to prevent that good in our selves, which we too fondly presume. A good Conceit of our selves is a very comfortable Passion; it sets us mightily at ease; and so it has always a sure friend of our Nature: on the other side, it breeds Carelesness, and prevents Diligence, and hinders Proficiency, and so it has always a sure friend of the Devil: and no wonder then that it so universally steals upon us. But besides these Two Causes, many men have a Third, why a Redundance of their good Opinion should light upon themselves, and that is, Because they spend so little of it upon others: Their ill thoughts and their Censures spend themselves all outwards; and so their good ones fall of course to their own share. But alas! how unreasonable as well as unjust a thing it is for any to censure the Inwards of another, when we

see that even good Men are not able to dive thro' the mystery of their own. Be assured therefore there can be but little honesty, without thinking as well as possible of others; and there can be no safety without thinking humbly and distrustfully of our selves. Had the Disciples but distrusted that Faith, which they so confidently pronounc'd, they had infallibly secur'd it; had they but cry'd (as once before) *Lord increase our Faith*, instead of *Now we believe*; they had infallibly prevented the shame of their approaching fall. But as it is the first Method of God's good pleasure to *give Grace unto the Humble*, so the next act of his Compassion is to bring the Confident to shame; That they may be made acquainted with Humbleness as a Necessity, who were not wise enough to prefer it as a Virtue.

Which brings me upon the Consideration of the Remainder of my Text, *Behold the hour cometh, yea is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone.* In which words we may observe, that, as the Disciples Crime was the *leaving* of their Master, so the Occasion of that Crime was their *Scattering*, and the Reason of their Scattering was their *καὶ ἑαίρα*, the concern that each of them had for their Own: *Ye shall be scattered every man to his Own, and shall leave me alone.*

To

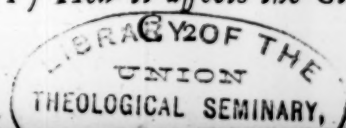
To form you a proper Instruction from this Passage, I shall infer these Two Propositions from it: 1. That when Christians divide, they leave their Master: And, 2. That it is *τα ἴδια*, our Own things, and not the things of Christ that makes us divide.

1. When Christians divide, they leave their Master. Where you may perceive I use the expression of the Text, in a sense that is only Analogical; For by leaving *Christ*, in the Text, is meant the leaving his Person; but by leaving *Christ*, in my Proposition, is meant the leaving of his Interest: And so the plainest sense of it will be this, That when Christians divide and enter into separate Communions, they do a thing that is injurious to *Christ*, and prejudicial to his Religion.----This is a matter wherein the present Posture of our affairs is highly concern'd; and therefore give me leave, tho' you know it already, to put you in remembrance of the Truth of it.

The Two great Ends of Religion and of *Christ's* Communion with his Church, are the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Men; and it is very manifest, that the dividing into separate Communions is extremely prejudicial to each of these Ends.

Let us see, (1) *How it affects the Glory of God.*

All



All the Christians in the World are in the Scripture-stile call'd but one Assembly, (*Ecclesia*) to intimate that tho' they are distant in places, yet they ought to be but One, both in Affections and Manner of Worship. God himself has ordained it to be so, and that with respect to his own Glory ; For so he commands himself to be honoured, so to be praised ; as being never well-pleased with the Worship of his People, but when it proceeds from Unity of Spirit, demonstrated by the Decency of a mutual resemblance. *S. Paul Rom. 15. 5.* argues, that both agreement of hearts, and agreement of Worship are expressly necessary to the Glory of God ; where he says, *Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one towards another, as it is in Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorifie God.* Upon which passage *Calvin* makes this Reflection, "*Non est ergo quòd jactet quispiam se Deo gloriam daturum suo more, &c.* Therefore (says he) Let no Man boast within himself that he will glorifie God after his own manner, for God hath such regard to the Concent of his Service, that he will not have his Glory set forth by the mouths of those that separate and disagree. Thus that Author.----- I allow that it adds to the Glory of a Prince, when we can say, that tho' his Subjects be divided into several Factions, and disagree among them-

themselves, yet they agree in this to honour him. This is true, because the Honour that is given to men is not affected with the Piety, but only with the sincerity of the Giver: but on the contrary, the honour given to God takes all its value from the pure Piety of the Giver; and therefore so long as our Conscience lyes under the Taint of such an irregularity as Division is, 'tis not all the honour of our Lips, that can make amends for the dishonour of our Hearts.

No man doubts but that the Glory of God is concern'd in the credit of his Religion; and yet how highly is Religion discredited by the Divisions of those that profess it? For since God has given Religion designedly as a Cure for all differences amongst men, and to reduce them to a consent of Minds and Hearts; if it shall happen any where that Religion be observed not to compass this end, who can hinder but that the Religion it self shall fall under the blame of it? witness those Calumnies and Reproaches that the Reformed Religion is at this day loaded with by its Adversaries; who for this very Reason, because there are such Divisions among us, seem to despise our Religion as false, as a Babel, as a Beast with many heads and horns all pushing at one another. Now, tho' this Argument does in truth prove no farther than this-- That the best
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Religion may be discredited by its Professors (and I am sure the Devil is alway most busie to bring it so about;) yet in the mean time, this very scandal, That our Religion is false, can never be wrested out of the mouths of those that seek to blaspheme it, till such time as the composing of our Differences shall take away that occasion that they have so unhappily given.

(2) If our Divisions have so ill an aspect towards the Glory of God, there is little hopes they should look better toward the Salvation of men: let us consider then in the next place with respect to that.

The Apostle tells us, *Eph. 4. 15. That Christ is the Head, from whom the whole Body being fitly joyned and compacted together, receiveth supplies in every part, to the edifying of it self in Love.* And a man need not make use of more words than these, and that Idea that is in them, to demonstrate how necessary Charity is to Edification, and Union to all the good Influences of God. I know it is possible some may satisfie themselves that they maintain Charity notwithstanding they break Communion; but we find by sad experience that this is next to impossible to be done: For when mens differences are about matters of Religion, Passion slides in under that fair pretext, and lays claim to Conscience it self; and it becomes

comes a piece of Zeal to be Uncharitable. Nay we may further observe that when the matter men differ about is very little, their Animosities are generally the highest; and the smaller the distance, the wider the breach: Insomuch that most can live more friendly with an Infidel that differs in the object of Worship, than with another Christian that differs only in the Form. The reason whereof must be this, That when the Opinions of others are at a great distance from our own, we look upon them as a simple Perswasion; but when they come near to ours we are apt to look upon them as a kind of Affront; presuming-- That where the distance is so little, it is not so much the Matter of the Controversie, as the Malice of the Party that keeps up the Difference. And this is a Prejudice that naturally inflames men to revenge, and breeds a Canker in Religion, that eats up the spirit of it.

But (without all this) supposing a man that breaks Communion, to maintain all other Charity as much as possible; supposing him to bear malice to none, to censure none, to pray for, to wish well to all; yet all this is short of the duty of Brotherly Love, *i.e.* That Love which one Christian owes to another: for Brotherly Love is not to be exprest but by Communicating in Religious Offices, *in breaking of Bread, and in Prayers,*

(as,

(as the Primitive Fellowship of Christians is expressed in the Holy Scripture) which offices have therefore in all Ages been look'd upon as the necessary Tests and Symbols of Christian Love.

I need not insist on the multitude of other Evils that Division is the Mother of: What a Harvest it is to wily Seducers, what a Rock to Unstable minds, what a Snare to Itching Ears, what an opportunity to Men of either wanton, or peevish Fancies, to sow the Tares of Confusion; what a provocation to God to suffer, that they who cannot agree with one another, should be devoured one of another. What need I say more of a thing that (we see) detracts from the Glory of God, and the honour of his Religion, that bars the influences of his Grace, and hinders Edification, that is an Immorality in it self, and a certain temptation to many others; what need I say more of it to make our Consciences condemn it?

In the mean time, I do not say that Communion is to be held upon any Terms whatsoever: I do not believe every Separation to be sinful, no more than I believe every Union to be Sacred. *Christ* may be left by those that hold together. In that prospect that the Holy Scriptures give us of the Kingdom of Antichrist, we do not learn that it should be a divided Kingdom; but, on the contrary, that it should be a mighty Confederacy,
and

and extensive Union to the setting up of an Idolatrous worship. In which case the Holy Spirit cries, *Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins.* Whensoever therefore the Terms of Communion come to be sinful, as they must be where Faith is innovated, Inventions obtruded, Corruptions past into a Law, and Communion charged with such obligations as are not deducible from the Rule of Christ, but bear a notorious inconsistency with it; There it becomes a Duty to Divide; and they are the Separatists that force to Separate, not They who deplore the necessity of so doing.

'Tis our own Case to stand separated from the Church of *Rome*; but we call Heaven to witness that it is not from any spirit of Division in us: let but the Holy Scripture be the Rule, and primitive Antiquity the Judge, and we are ready to abide by the Award, and unite in the issue of such a Determination. And as they that will agree upon any other Terms, must resolve to sacrifice Religion to a League, whereas on the other side, They that will not agree upon such Terms as these, seem resolved to sacrifice Christianity to Faction.

2. So I pass to my Second Proposition, which is this—That it is our Own Things, and not the Things of Christ, which makes us divide.

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It has always been, and always will be a pretence among Christians, so long as they divide, that Religion engages them to do so: But Religion all the while mourns under, and remonstrates against the slander. Religion implores men to be both more Charitable towards one another, and towards Her: For it is not only a sin to divide, but it is a greater sin to entitle Religion to the guilt of our Dividing. The Things of *Christ* and of Religion are These, as the Apostle tells us, *Gal. 5. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*: Did ever these Graces engage men to divide? the Charge of Religion is this, as the same Apostle, *If there be any Consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord and of one mind*. Did ever such a Pathetical Adjuration as This engage men to divide? If therefore the practice of men be found to run opposite to these fundamental Graces, and most Sacred Obligations of Christianity, 'tis no rashness to conclude, That they are moved by some other Springs than those of a well-weighed Religion.

Of those that separate from our Communion, some pretend Conscience, as if our Communion were unlawful; and some pretend Edification, as if

if our Communion tho' it were lawful yet it edified not. Let us now fairly examine these Two Pretences, and see whether they are bottom'd upon the Things of Christ or our Own.

1. As to them that plead Conscience for their separating from us, give me leave to premise, That it is not sufficient for any man's Repole to say that he is acted by his Conscience in what he does: For we ought to consider, that since Conscience is no other than our present Perswasion, our Conscience must needs lye at the mercy of every thing that has power to perswade us; and hence it oftentimes comes to pass that while Conscience acts us, it self is acted by Passions and weakneses, and what then must become of the Regularity of what we do? I know every man detests the Charge of being sway'd in matters of Religion, either by Interest or Peevishness, or Pride or Appetites or Aversions, or any thing that is either avowedly evil or shamefully weak; and therefore I shall not charge any man with being so swayed: But yet I shall observe for the Caution of us all, that all these things find a way to pass into our Consciences, and there to act as securely as it were behind the Curtain; even at that time when we should be ready to detest them in their own naked appearance. And for the truth of this I shall appeal to some undeniable experience.

We have known some, who out of wantonness of Wit, and affectation of singularity, have made a perfect new Model of Christian Religion; have made a God without Eternity, and a Saviour without Satisfaction, and a Hell without Torments; have first admir'd this their Scheme, and then believ'd it; and so become Masters of a numerous Sect: And thus Vanity has past into Conscience. We have known others of a morose Complexion, who falling as it were into dislike with that sweetness that Christianity obliges to, and those Sacraments that are the Ties of Union, and that Gospel that so instantly presses it, have come to believe that the very Gospel-Institutions are but Type and shadow; That every Man has a surer word of Prophecy within himself; And that God must be serv'd without all Positive Ordinances: And these have sprang into a numerous Sect: And thus Complexion has past into Conscience. Others we know whose Covetousness has first inclined them to teach, and then the success of their Doctrine has inclined them to believe, that the Merits of Humane Piety may be transfer'd from Person to Person, and that the fruits of Repentance may be purchased at a price: And thus Avarice has past into Conscience. Others we know, who having let their Minds grow gross and carnal, and then finding themselves either too
much

much aw'd, or too much at a loss in their Devotions to a Pure and Invisible Being, have introduc'd sensible Objects of Worship, and humane Mediators, to whom they might address both with more boldness, and more carelessness: And thus Carnality has past into Conscience. Others we know, who being of a temper more Zealous and fierce, have perswaded themselves that all is Sacred, that they do for the advancement of their own Opinions; and so have allow'd and practis'd Persecutions, Murders, Outrages; and thought that in these they have done God good service: And thus Cruelty has past into Conscience. We have known others, who being uneasie in their Worldly circumstances, and then reflecting on that mysterious intimation that *Christ* should sometime reign alone upon the Earth, have believ'd (as they were willing) that the time was now accomplish'd; and thereupon have cry'd down all worldly Government as Antichristian, and hop'd to set up *Christ* and themselves together: And thus Discontent has past into Conscience. We know others, who being bred up under Masters, better skill'd in Affirming than Proving, have been taught to believe, That the most commendable Faith is that which swallows all things without examination, and the more Reason a man hears against himself, the more meritorious is his obstinacy:
And

And thus Credulity has past into Conscience. Others, who being fond of some Opinions, which they had no other foundation to build upon, have made them Canonical by their Dreams: And thus Fondness has past into Conscience. And have we not heard of others, who have been as it were devoted to an Aversion from their Youth? warn'd to avoid a particular Communion at the peril of their Souls? told that it was Antichristian, Popish, Socinian, Pelagian, and made to believe it monstrous, without ever understanding it? And thus Prejudice has past into Conscience. If then both mens Appetites and Passions, Follies and Prejudices, Fondnesses and Aversions, Wishes and Dreams may pass into their Consciences, and prescribe and govern there, as we see by these undeniable experiences they may; I need say no more to prove that even when Men separate under that venerable pretext of Conscience, they may yet separate for those things which Christ will never own to be his.-----Let such therefore bring their Conscience to its proper Light: For as it is necessary for all to be guided by their Conscience, so it is as necessary that Conscience it self be guided by the Word of God. Now we readily acknowledge that the Scripture does in some cases authorize us to separate: *Come out of her my people*, says the Holy Spirit; *Rev. 18. 4. Come out from*

from among them and be ye separate, says the same Spirit, 2 Cor. 6. 17. But let it be consider'd that in both those places the Cause alledged to justify the Separation, is an Idolatrous Worship and nothing less: Let those that separate from us therefore instance, where is that defiling Pitch, where is that dangerous Contagion to be found in our Church? How hath our Church faln from the Faith, how hath she corrupted the Doctrines of Christianity? Till they can do so, their Separation cannot appear to have any Authority from Scripture; and therefore it must be a Separation of that kind which the Scripture every where condemns for a sin.

But here comes in the Second Plea, with a mien of greater Sobriety; I mean the Plea of those who cry—"Your Communion is Lawful, but it
 "edifies not, and therefore since we have the liberty of Separate Assemblies, Religious Prudence obliges us to go there, where we can edify.— My Friends, however we suppose all humane Laws for Unity of Worship are Dispensable at Pleasure; yet I hope it will never be an Opinion among us, that the Laws of God requiring the same Thing are so Dispensable. I have urged our Union from the obligations of Scripture and Inferences of Moral Reason, and I hope these are things that would stand undissolved among

us,

us, tho' all human Laws were repealed--- But let us come to examine the Plea itself.

Men cry they edifie not in our Communion : but how comes this to be possible ? Is it possible that a People, particularly in this City, should not be able to edifie under their establisht Clergy, whose Pious Labours all the World both applaud and profit by ? Was there ever any Church in the World that has furnisht the Piety of its Congregations with so many excellent Treatises both of Practicall and Devotional and Controversial Divinity as this hath done ? and yet is it possible that men should not be able to edifie under such a Ministry as this ? I must confess it is possible, but the reason of the possibility is Scandalous ; For it is Prejudice that hinders our Edification ; Prejudice that would hinder a man from improving under the labours of an Angel. None deny but that our Saviour was a most Edifying Preacher ; and yet it is as evident that a great many of those that heard him were never the better for all that he said. They were such who for their particular reasons spread about ill Characters of him ; and entertained a mean opinion of him ; and with this Prejudice they hardned themselves against all the influence of his Preaching. Prejudice is a thing whereby Christ has always suffer'd ; and doubtless he does so now in a high measure among us.-- Could but
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the wooings of God once prevail upon us to lay this aside; could we but once come to the Congregation prepar'd with Meekness and Patience and Love; then every word would sound both more Instructive to us and more moving: Then besides all other possible improvements, we should be sure to reap this (*viz.*) the mortifying of an uncharitable Appetite, which at present is the occasion both of publick Scandal and Calamity; and I am sure this would be a better measure of Edification, then it is possible for us to arrive at in any separate Assembly.

But I am aware, that the greatest Prejudice is still behind; 'tis that which lies against our Publick Prayers. For it cannot pass the observation of any man, nor the grieving of any good man, to see how when a Congregation is met to worship God, and are joyned in an Order of Prayers so agreeable to his Worship, there shall be some notwithstanding, who seem studiously concern'd to shew a disrespect to the service: Which is a behaviour so offensive, that tho' it may consist with an unthinking zeal; yet 'tis impossible that it can sit easie upon the Conscience of any man, that shall once come to be reflexive as well as Religious. Let us enter a little into the Merits of the Cause.

What man can say, but that in the whole course of our Prayers, the Conceptions are both awful

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and pious, and the expressions both proper and affectionate? What man can say but that the Praises there are suitable to the Majesty of God, and the Confessions proper for the humiliation of Sinners, and the Intercessions expressive of all the duties of Charity, and the Supplications extended to all the ordinary exigencies of Mankind? I know no sober man can say to the contrary. But then here lies the offence, they are common and known beforehand, and prescrib'd, and always the same; and this is nauseating; and this causes that they do not edifie. I confess I cannot think of any Argument to keep this Plea in countenance, but one, and that is this, (*viz.*) That it is ordinarily in the power of sudden and arbitrary Prayer to beget attention more than that which we were acquainted with before: But let me likewise observe that Piety has no share in the producing that Attention: for attention to any thing that is New to us, is the necessary product of simple Curiosity: And this is the Reason that chains our Ears to an *extemporary* Speaker; our Imaginations are held busie in apprehending his Matter, in weighing his Words, in estimating his Talent, and in watching after somewhat that may possibly be peculiar and surprizing: Whereas when this is done, and the Prayer ended, our very dislike of having the same Form again, is a plain proof that our

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Curiosity affects us more than our Devotion: For if the Form we have heard were in it self good and properly expressive of all our concerns with God, a sincere Piety would never nauseate the eternal repetition of it. Methinks it were but just that, when men come to worship God, they should rather consider what pleases God, than what pleases themselves: Now can any one say that God is not pleased with a set Form of Prayer? How comes it then to pass that whereas the Holy Scripture makes mention twice of the Devotion used by the Church Triumphant in Heaven, we are taught in both places that it consists in a set Form, (Consult *Isa. 6.* together with *Rev. 4.* and you shall find it so.) Now I hope none dare charge those Blessed Spirits (as they may when they please the Ministers of our Church) that they use a set Form either because of Poverty of Invention or Laziness of affection: No, They use it in Testimony that what is always good and proper, ought always to please; and that it is only the untutor'd infirmities of our own Imaginations that makes us hunt after Change. But beside this; we know well enough that the power and energy of Prayer cannot consist in any variety of words, but only in suiting our affections to the words that we use: Now when we know before-hand the words that are to be used, or may have them before our eyes; our

Soul is at perfect leisure to suit and raise and change her Affections, according to the importance of every Word: Whereas while the Soul is held in suspense about the meaning of a Sentence, till such time as it be finished (as it must necessarily happen in extemporary Prayer) she is in a great measure depriv'd of this advantageous leisure; and tho' the Imagination be still kept busie, yet the affections can never follow, but by starts and with disorder. And yet more than this---Whereas it is apparent, that Curiosity does beget attention in Prayer, as well as Piety, and yet the latter only can be acceptable to God; a Man cannot have the advantage, but only from a set Form, to discern whether his attention be truly pious or no; because he can then onely judge how far Piety does move him, when it moves him alone, and Curiosity is disingag'd.

If therefore it be our Prejudice that hinders our Edification, as it certainly appears it does in this instance of Publick Prayer; which an humble preparation of heart may make a better use of to all the ends of Piety, than it possibly can of any extemporary Form; I hope we cannot say our Prejudice is a thing of Christ's; and therefore it is our Own things, that in this instance likewise occasions us to divide.

And now You our Brethren who have falln out
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with us by the way, Consider (I beseech you) how we shall answer it at our Journeys end. Our Quarrel is, that we will not *walk by the same Rule*; and yet we are commanded to *walk by the same Rule*. Our Defence is, that we imagine another Rule to be better; but still what we contend for is onely an Imagination, and what we condemn is a Command: Nay, were we certain that the Rule we propose is better; yet we are as certain, that Love is better than that. How triumphant-ly has it sounded of late from one side of the Nation to the other, That God is the only Sovereign of Conscience? Alas, that he were so! But he is not: Were God once the Sovereign of our Consciences in Deed, as we all acknowledge he is in Right; Farewel Separation: Our Mind and Way would then be but one; as our God is but one, and he *not the Author of Confusion, but of Peace*. Could we but once descend from our high pretences of Religion, to the Humility that onely makes men Religious; Could we but once prefer Christianity it self before the several Facti-
ons that bear its name, our Differences would sink of themselves; and it would appear to us, that there is more Religion in not contending, than there is in the matters we contend about.

And you our Brethren, the Pastors of those that separate, (for I am willing to cast away a
few

few words in the air, tho' there be none here concern'd to regard them.) I say you our Brethren, the Pastors of those that separate! What shall we do to conciliate or oblige you? Would you have us come off from the establishment to meet you? but that is not in our power: Do you think That Establishment so extremely blameable? But why will you always be Judges where you are Parties? we desire not to be so: Let all former Ages, and all the wise Men of the Indifferent World at this day be Judges betwixt us: In the mean time, why do you not vouchsafe us your correspondence? Why do you not seek the fruits of Peace in the methods of Peace? Come and see whether we are those supercilious, those untractable, those selfish Men: See whether you should not be welcome to our Friendships, if they were thought worthy: See whether you should not be welcome to our Fortunes, if they were thought needful. Cannot *the Consolation of Christ, and the Comfort of Love, and the Fellowship of the Spirit, and bowels and mercies* avail any thing to cement us? Must our own particularities continue to divide us, though the things of *Christ* conjure us to unite? Will you have no regard to the Requests of our Church, though all the Cords of Prudence, as well as Love, draw you on to her Communion? If it must be thus;

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In my poor Judgment, It is a most unreasonable enmity, that the Church of *England* labours under ; and I pray God it may be duly repented of, before it be brought to a severer Barr.

Finally, My Brethren, You, whom the Grace of God has settled in a just affection to our establish'd Church ; Reverence your Church above all other Churches ; but Christ himself above every Church. *Hold fast your Profession without wavering ; For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and his Reward is with Him ; Pray for the peace of Jerusalem : Let your Moderation be known unto all men : Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. And the God who hath loved us, and given us good hopes thro' his Grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good Word and Work. To whom be Glory, &c.*

E. I N I S.